THE SPREAD OF PRINTING

EDITED BY COLIN CLAIR

MAURITIUS, REUNION, MADAGASCAR AND THE SEYCHELLES

THE SPREAD OF PRINTING

EASTERN HEMISPHERE

Early Printing in Mauritius, Réunion Madagascar and the Seychelles

by

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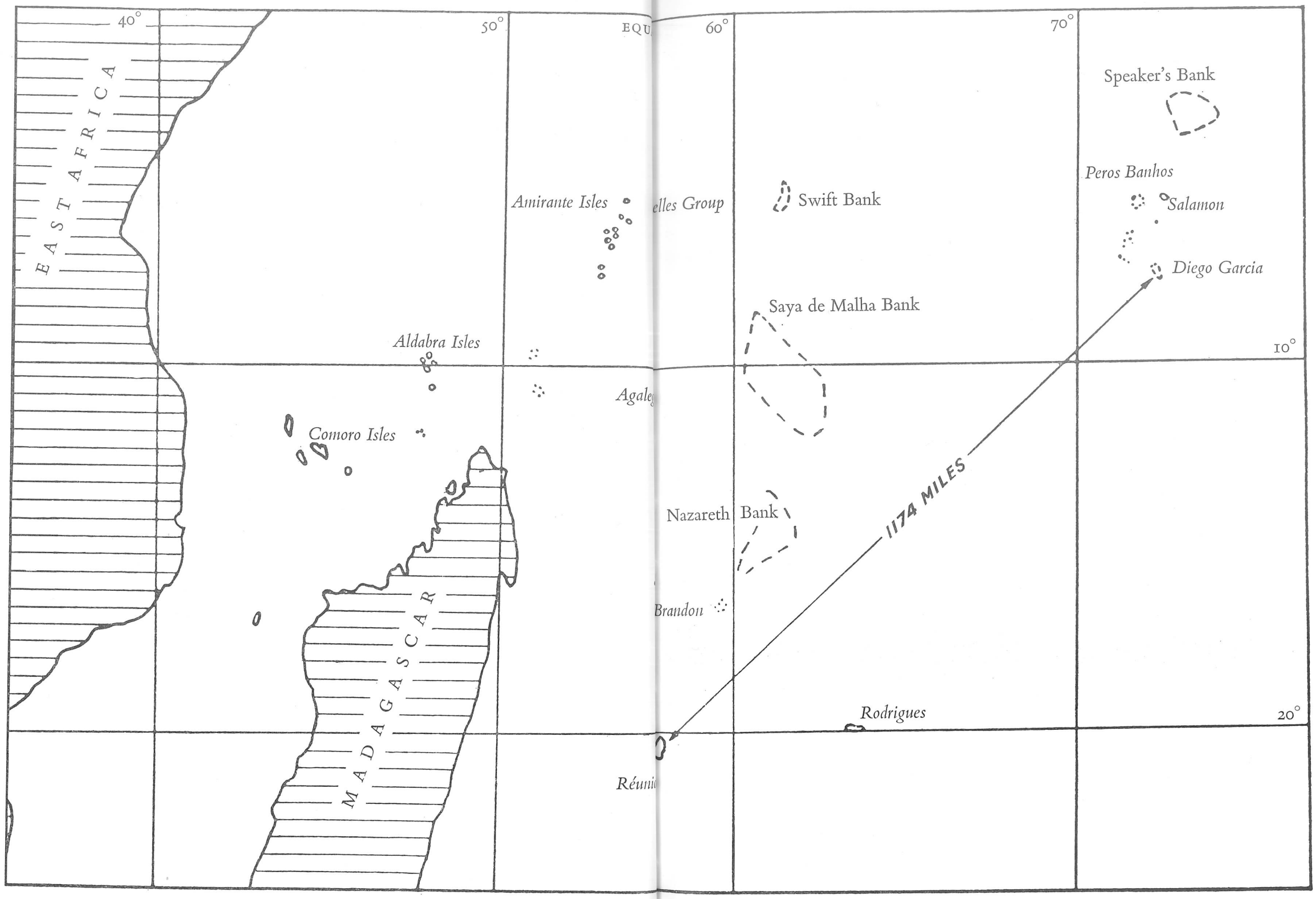
Introduction



General situation of the islands in the Western Indian O = 130 km; 1 inch = *c.* 200 miles. Scale 1 : 13,000,000

The Mascarene archipelago, situated in the South Indian Ocean, within the Tropic of Capricorn, includes three islands: Mauritius, formerly called Ile de France, Réunion, formerly called Bourbon, and Rodrigues.

In size Réunion is the largest, but since it has no good harbours it was overshadowed for a long time by Mauritius. Rodrigues, the smallest of the three, is also the least important.

Though discovered early in the sixteenth century, presumably by the Portuguese navigator Pedro Mascarenhas—from whom they took their name—these islands were not really opened to European settlement until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

The Dutch and the French were active there during the seventeenth century, but the Dutch finally left in 1710, and from then on, for a whole century, the French remained alone in the field in this region.

Using Ile de France as their headquarters, they established small settlements in the neighbouring island groups of Seychelles and Chagos and on the east coast of Madagascar, but they failed to occupy the latter permanently in the eighteenth century.

They also turned Ile de France into a naval base which proved so serious a menace to British progress in the Indian seas that its conquest had to be undertaken. In 1809 and 1810 the Mascarenes and the adjacent islands passed into British hands. At the peace settlement of 1815 Bourbon was restored to France and Madagascar was declared an open country, but all the other islands remained British.

Printing was introduced into Ile de France in 1767 and from there spread to Bourbon in 1792 and later on to Madagascar and Seychelles. Rodrigues, which is only a very small island, still has no printing office of its own.

Colonial Printing

It is a noteworthy fact that, although printing originated in China and was practised in the Far East long before it was introduced into Europe, its spread all over the world was due not to Orientals but to Europeans. The beginnings of oriental printing have been very ably studied by Carter,[1] but on the beginning of European printing in lands outside Europe and on the efforts of those who promoted it we have little information. This applies especially to former colonial territories in Asia and Africa.

While there is a spate of studies on the beginnings of printing in Europe and America there is as yet no comprehensive survey of its activities in European settlements overseas; and, save for a few monographs, the student has to rely mainly on the scanty information to be culled from the geographical bibliographies of Cotton, Ternaux-Compans, and Deschamps.

With regard to French colonial territories—with the single exception of Canada—no study of any importance is available on this topic. For the French West Indies the literature of printing is not very impressive. As for the French settlements in the Indian Ocean area we could find nothing more than a short study by Daruty de Grandpré when we began our own investigations on this topic some thirty years ago.

Gutenberg's invention made its appearance in French colonial possessions in the New World and in the East at about the same time, between 1760 and 1770. In the sixteenth century Portuguese pioneers had, it is true, taken printing presses to some of the distant lands they were then exploring. These presses, however, were

1. T. F. Carter, *The Invention of Printing in China, and its Spread Westward* (revised by L. Carrington Goodrich. 2nd edn. 1931).

just missionary presses run by monks and priests whose sole purpose was to spread the Gospel among the 'infidels'.

These ecclesiastical printers were soon followed, in some lands in the New World, by lay printers, but is was not until about the middle of the seventeenth century, after its introduction into the British North American colonies, that lay printing really began to spread on the American continent.

When after Payen's failure in 1723 Antoine Marie, a printer from Nantes, arrived in Saint Domingue (Haiti) in 1763 with his printing equipment, other printers were already operating in most countries of the American continent, including Canada, and in six of the West Indian islands, namely Cuba, Jamaica, Barbados, Saint-Christopher, Antigua, and Grenada. So, interesting as it may be, the record of the first French printers in that part of the world can hardly be described as an outstanding achievement.

On the other hand, the beginnings of printing in Ile de France (Mauritius) in 1767 constitute, as we shall see presently, an event of main importance, for no other country in the Indian Ocean region could then claim to be much in advance of this island in this respect.

Lay printing made its first appearance in this part of the world in 1668 when the Dutch East India Company put up a press in Java; but until the beginning of the nineteenth century this press was not very active. As a matter of fact, its first products were limited to a few official and religious publications, to some almanacs, and, from 1774, to three commercial papers, none of which lasted for any length of time.

In Ceylon a rather primitive press was made in 1729 by an armourer in the service of the Dutch East India Company named Schade, but very little progress seems to have been achieved until the close of 1736, when a new equipment was imported from Java.

As for the other countries in and around the Indian Ocean none of them did possess a lay printing press until much later. The claim that Cape Town was 'the earliest printing centre in the Southern Hemisphere' is quite groundless, since it was only in 1784—seventeen years after Ile de France—that the Cape received its first printing press, and we know now that the South African record is hardly comparable with that of the French island.

We shall deal more fully with the latter further on. At this stage we shall only

note that from 1767 to 1810, when the island was annexed by Britain, the output of its early presses included, besides a large number of official publications, several books of literary or scientific interest, some of which were important enough to be commended by the *Académie des Sciences*, a good series of almanacs, started in 1769, and not less than ten newspapers, the earliest of which was issued in 1773.

If one considers the small size of this island (710 square miles), its isolated position, and the fact that its European population was barely 10,000 strong in 1810, its achievement in this field appears all the more remarkable.

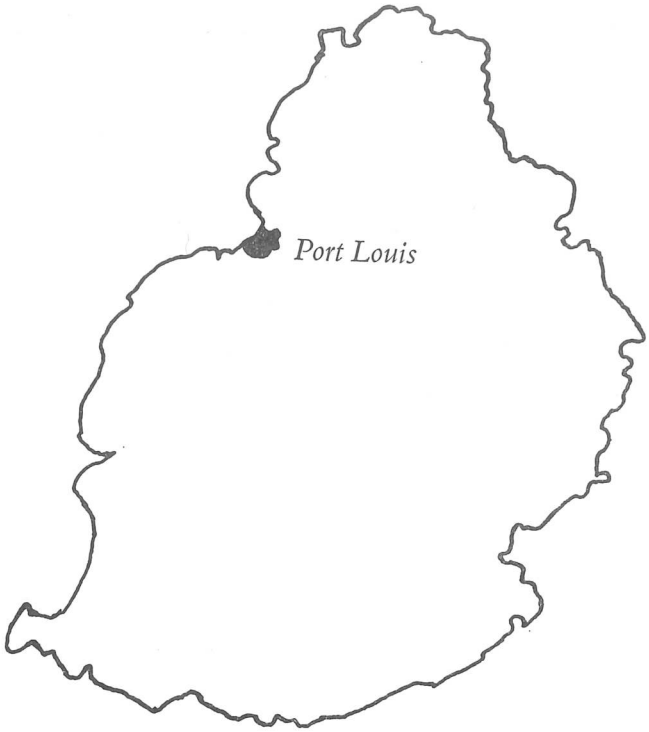
How can it be accounted for? Firstly, it should be noted that the European element in the Mascarene Islands, though numerically weaker than in the other French colonial territories at the end of the eighteenth century, was actually of a more enterprising type. Ile de France, especially, reckoned an intellectual class which played a most important part in the development of this colony. No other French colony in the eighteenth century is known to have produced, to take only one instance, a man like Cossigny who was, in a way, a giant.

We also find that printers fared better, on the whole, in the Mascarenes than in the French colonies of the West Indies. It is true that they did not always receive from the colonial administrators the assistance they applied for, that the contracts entered upon with them were not always honoured, and that a strict censorship was often exercised upon them, but they were never actually ill-treated or seriously hampered in the exercise of their profession.

Two more factors are worth mentioning: firstly, the Mascarenes suffered no upheavals comparable with those that shook the French West Indies during the troubled years of the French Revolution. Secondly, being constantly visited by merchant ships, even in wartime, they received a regular supply of paper and type from abroad throughout the period concerned.

All things considered, however, the printing record of these islands in the eighteenth century was due above all to the printers themselves. The story of printing in Europe shows that many of the early printers, from Gutenberg onwards, were men of sterling value. Printing outside Europe had its Gutenbergs, its Costers and its Schöffers, too: Fleury Mesplet in Canada, Joseph Payen in Saint-Domingue, Christian Ritter at the Cape of Good Hope, George Howe in Australia, Schade in Ceylon, to mention only a few. With all these Nicolas Lambert, head of the *Imprimerie Royale* of Ile de France, compares very favourably, as we shall see just now.

The first Printers of Mauritius



Sketch map of Mauritius
Area: 1838 km² (710 sq. miles)
Scale 1 : 633,600
1 cm = 6.3 km; 1 inch = 10 miles

The exact date of the introduction of the first printing press is not known, but we know for certain that the man who set it up and operated it arrived on 17th July 1767 on the *Dauphin*, with the famous intendant Poivre. He was called Pierre Saunois and was born in Burgundy in 1730.

Did the press also arrive on the *Dauphin*? The records are silent on this point, but it seems probable that it was set up before the end of 1767 in Port-Louis, in a building in rue de l'Hôpital, near the harbour, where it was to remain until 1790.

Early in 1768 work was started under the supervision of Saunois. It was believed for a long time, on the authority of Ternaux-Compans, that the earliest Ile de France imprint was a booklet entitled *Législation pour les Colonies des Isles de France et de Bourbon*, and dated 1768, which is preserved in the *Archives Nationales* in Paris, but our own researches brought to light an earlier specimen. This is a short poem composed by Saunois to dedicate the new press to the *dauphine* of France, Marie Josèphe de Saxe.

In January 1770 Saunois was replaced as head of the printing office, known as *Imprimerie Royale*, by Nicolas Lambert, a master-printer who came to Ile de France in 1767, shortly after Saunois. Born in Paris in 1741, he died in Ile de France in 1806, where during forty years he was almost continuously engaged in various printing and publishing activities, which brought him, on the whole, little profit.

Under Lambert the output of the press was increased, and in 1773 a new development took place with the issue of the first newspaper: *Annonces, Affiches et Avis divers pour les colonies des Iles de France et de Bourbon*. In 1773, too, Lambert published the first book proper to be issued in this island, a French-Malagasy phrase-book for the use of Roman Catholic missionaries working in Madagascar, compiled by a Lazarist priest named Challan.

Until 1783 things seem to have run fairly smoothly for Lambert, but then he began to experience difficulties; so, at the end of 1783, he passed on the management of the *Imprimerie Royale* to François Nicolas Bolle, of Strasburg, who filled the post of government printer until the outbreak of the French Revolution.

The reasons that induced Lambert to resign are not known. Nothing is known either of his activities during the next ten years. Whatever these may have been, they failed to satisfy him, for he was to revert finally to his former occupation.

At the end of 1787 it seems that a change of policy concerning the running of the printing office was envisaged and that the government contemplated farming it out as a privilege, but before the instructions received from France to that effect could be carried out the French Revolution broke out.

When this became known in Ile de France a Colonial Assembly was set up which gradually assumed the control of government. Shortly after its powers had been confirmed by the National Assembly in France it claimed the control of the press from the administrators. Bolle loudly protested, but his objections were waived aside and on 8th December 1790 the Colonial Assembly took over the press and moved it from the rue de l'Hôpital to a building in the rue du Rempart.

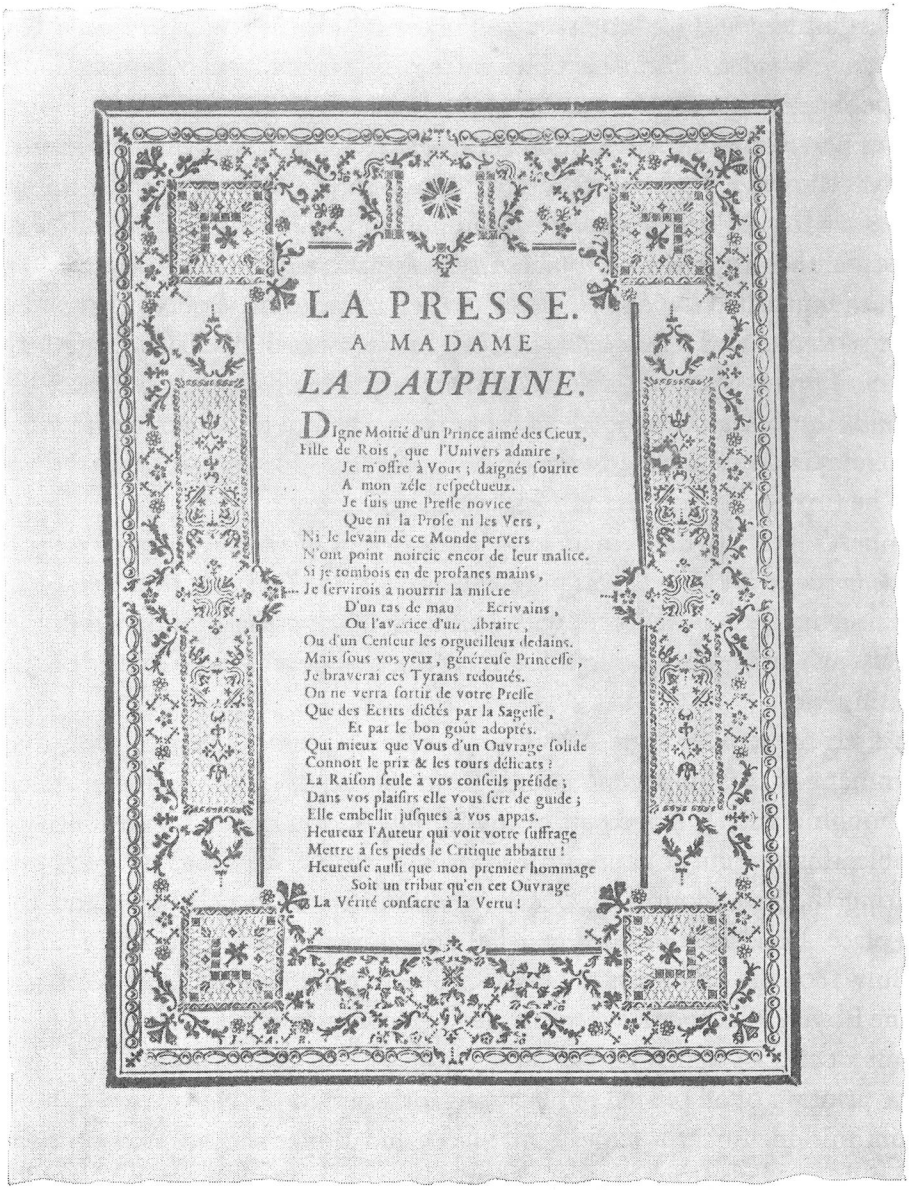
The services of Bolle were retained, however, and finally, on 22nd December 1791, the Assembly entered into an agreement with him whereby he was to become sole owner of the plant within ten years on certain conditions, one of which was that he undertook to publish an official gazette recording the acts of the Assembly.

Not long after this Lambert reappeared on the scene. In about 1795 he purchased the printing equipment from Bolle, after endorsing the contract of 22nd December 1791. But the printing office remained under Bolle's name which continued to appear on the imprint of all the publications it issued until his death in 1801.

After Bolle's death Lambert formed a society with Jacques Erny, Bolle's son-in-law, and with a trader named Boulle for running the press until the end of the ten-year period stipulated in the contract of 1791. At this stage, however, new developments took place.

In March 1801 a French expedition sent by Napoleon to explore the coast of Australia called at Ile de France with a mixed cargo including a new printing plant, belonging to one Louis Petitain, a merchant from Lyons.

In June 1801 Petitain was authorized by the Colonial Assembly to open in the



LA PRESSE.

A MADAME

LA DAUPHINE.

DIgne Moitié d'un Prince aimé des Cieux,
Fille de Rois, que l'Univers admire,
Je m'offre à Vous; daignés sourire
A mon zéle respectueux.
Je suis une Presse novice
Que ni la Prose ni les Vers,
Ni le levain de ce Monde pervers
N'ont point noircie encor de leur malice.
Si je tombois en de profanes mains,
Je servirois à nourrir la misere
D'un tas de mau Ecrivains,
Ou l'av..rice d'un .ibraire,
Ou d'un Censeur les orgueilleux dedains.
Mais sous vos yeux, généreuse Princesse,
Je braverai ces Tyrans redoutés.
On ne verra sortir de votre Presse
Que des Ecrits dictés par la Sagesse,
Et par le bon goût adoptés.
Qui mieux que Vous d'un Ouvrage solide
Connoit le prix & les tours délicats?
La Raison seule à vos conseils préside;
Dans vos plaisirs elle vous sert de guide;
Elle embellit jusques à vos appas.
Heureux l'Auteur qui voit votre suffrage
Mettre à ses pieds le Critique abbattu!
Heureuse aussi que mon premier hommage
Soit un tribut qu'en cet Ouvrage
La Vérité consacre à la Vertu!

The first Ile de France imprint, 1768 (Mauritius Archives)

rue de la Corderie in Port-Louis a printing establishment which became known at once as *Imprimerie de la rue de la Corderie*, as is evidenced by the imprint appearing on its publications.

In this new establishment Lambert found a serious rival, especially as his own plant was showing signs of decay after thirty-three years of service, but it was still possible for him to overhaul his equipment and face competition.

In September 1794 the Colonial Assembly had requisitioned the cargo of an American ship called the *Maryland* which had put in at Port-Louis on her way to the Danish settlement of Tranquebar, on the east coast of India. This cargo included ten cases of fine Baskerville type which Lambert then declined to purchase because he found it unadvisable to increase his expenses before the contract of 1791 came to an end. Circumstances now made it imperative for him to secure this type, which he finally did in 1802, at a fairly high figure.

Lambert's rival did not remain long in the field. On 22nd August 1802 the *Imprimerie de la rue de la Corderie* was purchased by Claude François Boudret, of Lyons, who immediately joined forces with Lambert. Their association lasted until January 1803, when Boudret bought Lambert out and became sole owner of the two establishments.

On 25th September 1803 Napoleon's envoy, General Decaen, took over the government of the Mascarene Islands from the hands of the Colonial Assembly, but, though a very full account of his administration of the islands until 1810 is available, this account contains little information on his dealings with the printers.

During the first months of Decaen's administration no change seems to have taken place. Boudret continued to act as government printer, then we find that on 20th July 1804 the office was given to two new printers, Paul Icery, of Brest, and Etienne Boyer, of Rhodez, whose names appear for the first time in the local records on a contract which they entered upon, on that date, with the administrators for the printing of all official publications for a period of five years.

From this document it appears that Icery and Boyer had no press of their own but simply used plant which was the property of the government. How the new administration came by this plant is not known. Did Decaen introduce a new press in 1803? This is hardly probable. Though the French government was then planning to send a new press to its Indian settlements, the evidence available tends to show that Decaen did not take it with him. What probably happened, therefore,

was that Decaen secured Boudret's press either by purchase or by requisition. He did, however, bring to Ile de France a new printer named Joseph Vallet who was originally to take charge of a printing establishment in Pondicherry, but could not land in India because of the renewal of hostilities between England and France in 1803.

This Vallet was employed by Icery and Boyer, and from 1806 apparently took over the management of the printing office from Icery, Boyer having left for Réunion Island in 1804 to run a printing office there.

In 1810, when British forces captured the Mascarenes, the Ile de France printing office was still in the rue du Rempart. In 1811 an Englishman was appointed to supervise it. In 1813 a new government press was imported from England, and in the following twenty years two more presses were introduced by private individuals. What became then of the old French press is not known.

The Mauritius Record

The products of the early presses of Mauritius, from 1768 to 1810, may be divided as follows: (1) the almanacs, (2) the newspapers, (3) the official publications and (4) miscellaneous private publications.

Of this output only about 400 specimens have survived to this day, scattered in various repositories in Mauritius, France, and England—enough, however, to give us a good idea of the whole.

The most important collection is that of the Mauritius Archives, which comprises chiefly official publications. The Curepipe Carnegie Library, in Mauritius, has a number of early almanacs and a few publications of scientific or literary interest. The British Museum in London holds several early newspapers and other early imprints from Mauritius. The Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris has a few, and some more are to be found in the collection of books and papers of Moreau de Saint-Méry preserved in the Archives Nationales.

The almanacs, which rank among the earliest 'incunabula' of Ile de France, are of particular importance, and few colonial almanacs of the eighteenth century can compare with them. The only French colonial almanacs for this period that have been properly studied are those of Canada on which there is a good monograph by E. Rouillard, and the comparison between Canada and Ile de France in this respect definitely tips the balance in favour of the latter.

The earliest almanac printed in Canada was *The Nova-Scotia Calendar* published by Anthony Henry at Halifax from 1770 to 1800 nearly every year. The first French almanac was issued by Fleury Mesplet in Montreal in 1778, and seems to have been discontinued in 1784: the second one, started by William Brown at Quebec in 1780, was continued, after Brown's death in 1789, by the Neilson brothers until 1841, with few interruptions.

Both these almanacs were imitated, says Rouillard, not from French but from British almanacs such as *The Royal Calendar* and *Rider's British Merlin*. Their subject-matter was neither much varied nor extensive, comprising little else besides the calendar, the phases of the moon, a list of the clergy and a few anecdotes and poems.

The other almanacs mentioned by Rouillard are of the type known as *almanachs galants*. There were two of them, one for 1799 and one for 1807, and each had only one issue. They both contained only light literary pieces.

The Ile de France almanacs, on the other hand, whose main purpose was to supply seamen with useful information on navigation in the Indian Ocean area, were essentially scientific, but during the French Revolution they also assumed a political and even a philosophical character. Regarding general information they were definitely broader in scope than their Canadian counterparts, and they constitute a veritable mine of information for historians.

The first Ile de France almanac was issued in 1769 by Laurent Masson-Abraham, who served there as an artillery officer from 1767 to 1794, and was a prominent member of that little élite we have already mentioned. From 1769 to 1794 he published regularly a series of almanacs, each issue of which improved upon the previous one. During the Revolution the almanacs were discontinued, but they were revived in 1801 and published again without interruption down to 1810.

The first newspaper or 'gazette' came out, as we have seen, in 1773. Lambert's *Annonces, Affiches et Avis divers pour les colonies des Isles de France et de Bourbon* lived until 1790 and were deservedly popular.

In July 1786 two young lawyers of Port-Louis, Armand Durrans and Edmond Brun, tried to set up a *société de pensée*, or literary circle, on the model of the *Cercle des Philadelphes* formed in Saint-Domingue in 1785, and they launched, to serve as its medium, a literary paper called *Journal des Isles de France et de Bourbon* which lived for two years.

The French Revolution gave birth to the first political newspaper, edited by another young lawyer, Burnel. This paper called *Journal hebdomadaire de la colonie* ran from January 1791 to July 1792 and seems to have stirred quite an uproar against Burnel, who finally had to leave for France.

Soon after Burnel's paper ceased to appear the Colonial Assembly made arrangements with Bolle, as we have seen, for publishing two newspapers entitled respect-

(1)

N.° 1.

ANNONCES, AFFICHES
ET AVIS DIVERS POUR LES COLONIES
DES ISLES DE FRANCE ET DE BOURBON.

Du Mercredi 13 Janvier mil ſept cent ſoixante-treize.

BRITISH MUSEUM

AVANT-PROPOS.

DAns le Proſpectus que Nous avons rendu public le mois de Décembre dernier, nous avons indiqué les matieres qui feroient le fond de notre Feuille Hebdomadaire. Nous devons dire que l'approbation dont M. M. les Adminiſtrateurs des deux Iſles & le Public caroiſſent honorer notre projet, donne une nouvelle chaleur au zèle qui nous l'a ſuggéré, & que jaloux de mériter leurs ſuffrages, nous ferons les plus grands efforts pour les contenter. Nous demandons ſeulement un peu d'indulgence dans les commencemens d'une entrepriſe qui étant ici la premiere de ſon genre laiſſe tout à créer. Ceux qui examineront de près la tâche que nous prenons ſentiront aſſez qu'elle n'eſt pas ſans difficulté dans ſes détails, que nous avons beaucoup de choſes a faire, bien des obſtacles à lever, peut-être bien des contradictions à éprouver. Il ne falloit pas moins que le déſir de nous rendre utiles pour ſurmonter nos inquiétudes à cet égard: Heureux ſi nous parvenons au but que nous nous ſommes propoſés.

C'eſt ici le moment de nous expliquer ſur la conduite que nous avons réſolu de tenir dans la compoſition de nos Feuilles. Soumis nous mêmes au jugement du public, nous ſommes bien éloignés de vouloir haſarder notre opinion ſur les pieces qui nous ſeront adreſſées. L'on ne doit donc eſperer de nous, ni éloges ni critiques., La ſeule liberté que nous prendrons ſera d'extraire du mieux qu'il nous ſera poſſible, mais toujours avec fidélité les écrits, qui par leur étendue, devroient avoir une ſuite trop longue dans notre feuille, a moins que les lecteurs ne témoignent préférer de jouir de ces écrits en entier.

Lorſque par Notre Proſpectus nous avons fait l'énumération de toutes les parties que l'objet de notre travail embraſſe, il nous eſt échappé d'y faire mention des nouvelles de la Métropole. Comme il n'y a qu'un très petit nombre de perſonnes ici qui reçoivent les Gazettes, nous nous ſommes perſuadés que ceux de Mrs. les Abonnés qui ſont privés de cet avantage, ne ſeront pas fachés du ſoin dont nous nous occuperons de rapporter les articles les plus intéreſſans pour ces Colonies, tels que la nomination aux Charges & aux Emplois, la publication des Édits, Déclarations, Lettres Patentes, &c. Les expériences, les inventions, les découvertes les plus ſuſceptibles d'être appropriées à notre économie; enfin l'annonce des livres nouveaux.

First issue of the first Ile de France newspaper, 1773 (Mauritius Archives)

ively *Gazette de l'Isle de France* and *Journal des Assemblées*, the first of which contained information of a general nature and the second was a record of the enactments of the Assembly. Started in January 1792, these two papers were continued down to about 1801.

In May 1799 yet another newspaper was started by François-Marie Mayeur, who seems to have made a name for himself in France later on as a literary gent. Although he described himself as a 'political and literary journalist', his paper, *Le Chroniqueur Colonial*, can hardly be regarded as political and was almost purely literary. It did not live more than a few months.

In September 1801 Bolle's *Gazette* was replaced by another paper entitled *Le Nouvelliste des Isles de France et de la Réunion*, with a commercial supplement known as *Petites Affiches*, both printed by the *Imprimerie de la rue de la Corderie*. When Boudret purchased that printing office in 1802 he changed the title to *Journal des Isles de France et de la Réunion*.

Under the administration of general Decaen two more newspapers were issued: *Le journal hebdomadaire des Isles de France et de la Réunion*, started by Icery in September 1805 and *Petites Affiches de l'Isle de France*, started by Vallet in 1809.

Of main importance among the official publications were the various codes or collections of laws, the most important being the *Code Delaleu*, so called from its compiler, Etienne Delaleu, a member of the *Conseil Supérieur* or high court of Ile de France. It records all the legislative enactments issued there during the administration for the King of France and comprises five thick volumes issued between 1777 and 1787 by the *Imprimerie Royale*.

This Code is a most valuable source of information on French legislation in the Mascarenes before the Revolution. From a typographical standpoint it may be regarded as the finest product of the first press of Ile de France.

The legislative enactments issued by the Colonial Assembly during the Revolution are to be found in the *Journal des Assemblées* mentioned above. Some laws and enactments of special importance were also printed separately during that period.

For the Napoleonic period (1803–1810) there are two different sets of publications. The first is a yearly record of all the enactments issued by general Decaen entitled *Recueil des arrêtés du capitaine général*, which later on became known as *Code Decaen*. The second comprises the three Napoleonic codes adopted in Ile de

France during Decaen's administration: *Code Civil des Français* (1805); *Code de procédure civile* (1808); and *Code de commerce* (1810).

Official publications issued before 1810 further include a large number of posters or handbills, some of which—the earliest ones especially—are fine specimens of the typographic art. Most of these are now gathered in the Mauritius Archives.

The output of the early presses of Ile de France was not limited to the almanacs, newspapers, and official reports. Publications of a more general nature included quite a number of books and pamphlets representative of every branch of intellectual activity: scientific, literary, religious, and political.

We have seen that about 1770 a little *élite* was coming into being in Ile de France. Its chief representatives were men engaged in scientific pursuits, two of whom are particularly worth mentioning because, like Masson-Abraham, they both became correspondents of the *Académie des Sciences* in Paris. The first is Nicolas de Céré, well known for his contributions to the science of botany, the second is Joseph François Charpentier de Cossigny whose activities were chiefly devoted to the promotion of agriculture.

Much of Céré's work remained unpublished, but Cossigny published some forty books and memoirs, five of which were printed in Ile de France between 1773 and 1784. The most remarkable is a study entitled *Lettre à M. Sonnerat* printed in 1784 in which he exposed many fallacies and inaccuracies contained in Pierre Sonnerat's account of the Mascarenes.

During the French Revolution the character of the output changed, politics became the main occupation, and scientific and literary pursuits were somewhat neglected. Cossigny himself turned from science to politics and was engaged during the revolutionary years in political activities in France, in the capacity of delegate of Ile de France.

Of main importance among the revolutionary publications are the political speeches of which, unfortunately, only three printed specimens are now extant. Of special interest, too, are the publications of the revolutionary societies or clubs.

Although politics dominated the scene the revolutionary years were not a period of intellectual decline, for they were marked by the creation of the first state-college in Port-Louis, the opening of a school of painting and the formation of a *Société des Sciences et Arts*.

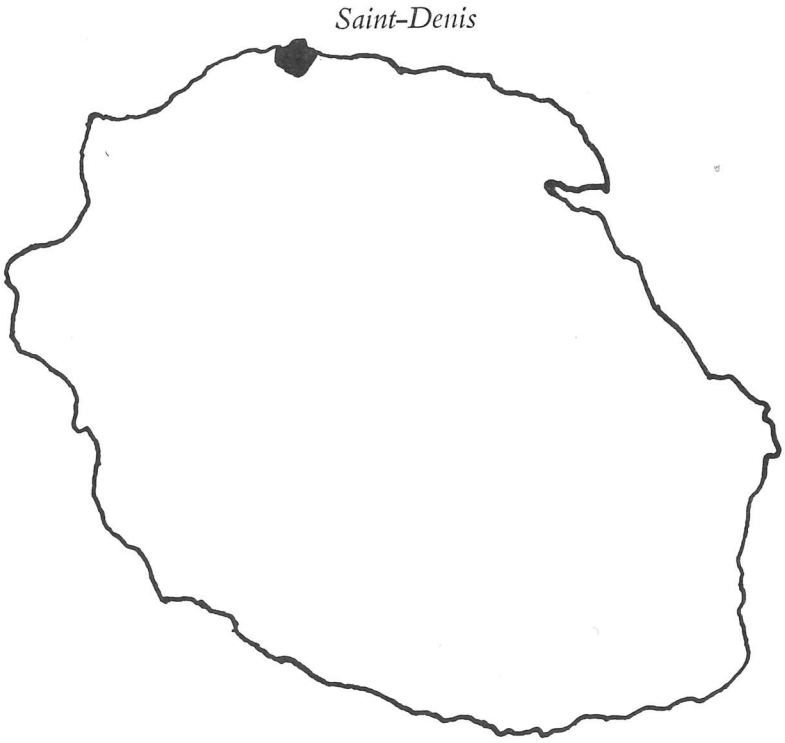
During the government of Decaen intellectual development received further

impulse. The new governor and most of the officials who came with him were cultivated men. Decaen devoted special attention to the improvement of the educational system and promoted the establishment of a reading-room in Port-Louis which is mentioned in Trelawny's account of his visit to Ile de France in the early nineteenth century.

With the abolition of the republican organziation the attention of the inhabitants became diverted from politics to other subjects. There was a revival of interest in science and literature, but this time literature was most in favour. The chief writer of this period was a retired naval officer named Froberville who published in 1803 a novel called *Sidner, ou les dangers de l'imagination*, inspired from Goethe's *Werther*. It is probably one of the earliest 'colonial' works of fiction.

Of religious publications the early Ile de France imprints include very few specimens, and this is worthy of note if we consider that in other countries in the Indian Ocean area most printing presses were set up with a religious motive. In Ile de France, on the other hand, the priests had little to do with printing. Apart from the Malagasy phrase-book issued in 1773 by Challan for the use of missionaries working in Madagascar there is practically nothing worth recording in the way of religious publications.

The Bourbon Record



Sketch map of Réunion Island
Area: 2500 km² (965 sq. miles)
Scale 1:633,600
1 cm = 6.3 km; 1 inch = 10 miles

The Archives of Saint-Denis (the capital of Bourbon, now known as Réunion Island) do not contain any reference to printing before the outbreak of the French Revolution. Before this time the need for a printing press does not seem to have made itself felt in Bourbon. The almanacs, newspapers and official publications printed in Ile de France were common to both islands, and, although this arrangement was not quite satisfactory, as in those days communications between the two islands were not so rapid as they are now, there is no evidence that the settlers of Bourbon complained about it.

The establishment of representative government under the Revolution, which made it necessary for the settlers to be informed on the activities of the Colonial Assembly, brought about a change in the situation. In December 1790 an attempt was made to obtain printing material from Ile de France. This having failed, Bourbon then applied for a printing press to the National Assembly in France in 1791. The request was granted, and when in 1792 civil commissioners were sent out to the Mascarenes to place the republican organization on a proper footing they took with them a printing plant which reached Saint-Denis in June 1792.

During several months the plant remained unused in the government warehouse, for want of a printer to work it. The best plan would have been to bring over a printer from the neighbouring island, but the Bourbon Assembly preferred to employ for this purpose a priest converted to the republican ideology named Louis Delsuc, who had come to settle in Reunion in 1790.

Delsuc had some vague notions of the art of printing, and eventually he managed to get the press in working order with the help of a mechanic named Farnier and of a former employee of the *Imprimerie Royale* of Ile de France named Rivière who was then living in Saint-Denis.

The press began to work early in 1793, and it would appear that its first products were paper-money notes. The earliest printed specimen now extant is a booklet entitled *Code Pénal Militaire pour toutes les troupes de la République en temps de guerre*. It bears the imprint *De l'Imprimerie Coloniale* and was found in the Archives of Mauritius in a bundle of papers sent by the Colonial Assembly of Bourbon to that of Ile de France.

It is also known that the first products of the Bourbon press included two other official publications and a memorandum written by vice-admiral de Saint-Félix, but none of these publications has survived.

In 1794 the Bourbon Assembly farmed out the press to Louis Delsuc for a limited period. Delsuc then started the first Bourbon newspaper under the title of *Le Vrai Républicain*, not more than five issues of which are now extant.

At about the same time he made an attempt to secure the cases of type brought to Ile de France by the American ship *Maryland*, to reinforce his own printing equipment. Having failed, he finally discontinued his printing activities in 1796, and it would seem that between 1797 and 1803 the Bourbon press remained inactive.

On 26th October 1803 general Decaen's deputy in Bourbon was reporting to his superiors in Ile de France that the plant was definitely out of order.

Early in 1804, however, Etienne Boyer, whose partnership with Icery, of Ile de France, has already been noted, managed to repair the Bourbon press, and, having apparently procured some new type from his associate Icery, revived for good the *Imprimerie Coloniale* of Saint-Denis.

Towards the end of 1804 he started a *Gazette de l'Isle de la Réunion*. According to Azéma, author of a study on journalism in Réunion, this paper was quite a success, and Boyer soon found it necessary to issue a commercial supplement called *Petites Affiches de la Réunion*, the first instalment of which came out in January 1805. From 18th October 1806, when the island had its name changed once more to that of Ile Bonaparte, the two papers modified their titles and went by those of *Gazette de l'Isle Bonaparte* and *Petites Affiches de l'Isle Bonaparte*.

Boyer's paper continued to be issued regularly after the conquest of Réunion by the British in 1809. In 1815, when the island was restored to the French and renamed Bourbon, it once more changed its title to that of *Gazette de l'Isle Bourbon*.

The only other products of Boyer's press prior to 1809 that have been traced are

No. 4 of *Le Vrai Républicain* started in Réunion in 1794 (Réunion Archi

(N.° 4.)

LE VRAI REPUBLICAIN,

OU

JOURNAL POLITIQUE ET LITTÉRAIRE DE L'ISLE DE LA RÉUNION.

PREMIÈRE DÉCADE DE BRUMMAIRE, an III. de la République Française.

Il en est de toute société, comme des pierres d'une voûte, qui ne se soutiennent que par leur réunion. (Sénèque.)

POLITIQUE.

Suite de l'histoire des lois.

ROME tira ses lois d'Athènes. ROMULUS fils d'une Prostituée et chef de brigands fonda cette ville, qu'il consacra au Dieu *Mars*. Il voulut que les rois eussent un pouvoir suprême dans les affaires de justice et de religion, plaça les *Patriciens* dans le sénat, et les *Plébéiens* dans les tribus, et donna aux maris le droit de punir de mort leurs femmes, lorsqu'elles seraient convaincues d'ivrognerie ou d'adultère. La puissance des pères sur leurs enfans était sans bornes. Pour lier les plébéiens aux patriciens, il établit le patronat ; les devoirs du patron envers son client étaient ceux d'un père envers ses enfans, et le client, de son côté, était obligé de rendre à son patron tous les services dont il était capable. Il voulut que les murs de sa ville fussent sacrés, et tua son frère pour avoir osé les franchir.

Aux lois de Romulus, NUMA son successeur en joignit de nouvelles ; l'acte le plus philosophique de sa législation, est celui par lequel il défendit de donner aux Dieux aucune forme corporelle. Il adoucit les mœurs des romains par ses vertus pacifiques, il divisa l'année en douze mois et les jours en *fastes* et *nefastes*, c'est-à-dire, en fêtes et non fêtes.

Après lui, TULLUS HOSTILIUS prince belliqueux voulut que tous les enfans qui naîtraient au nombre de trois, fussent nourris aux dépens du public.

Telles sont les principales lois que Rome reçut de ses rois ; mais, elles tomberent presque toutes avec la monarchie.

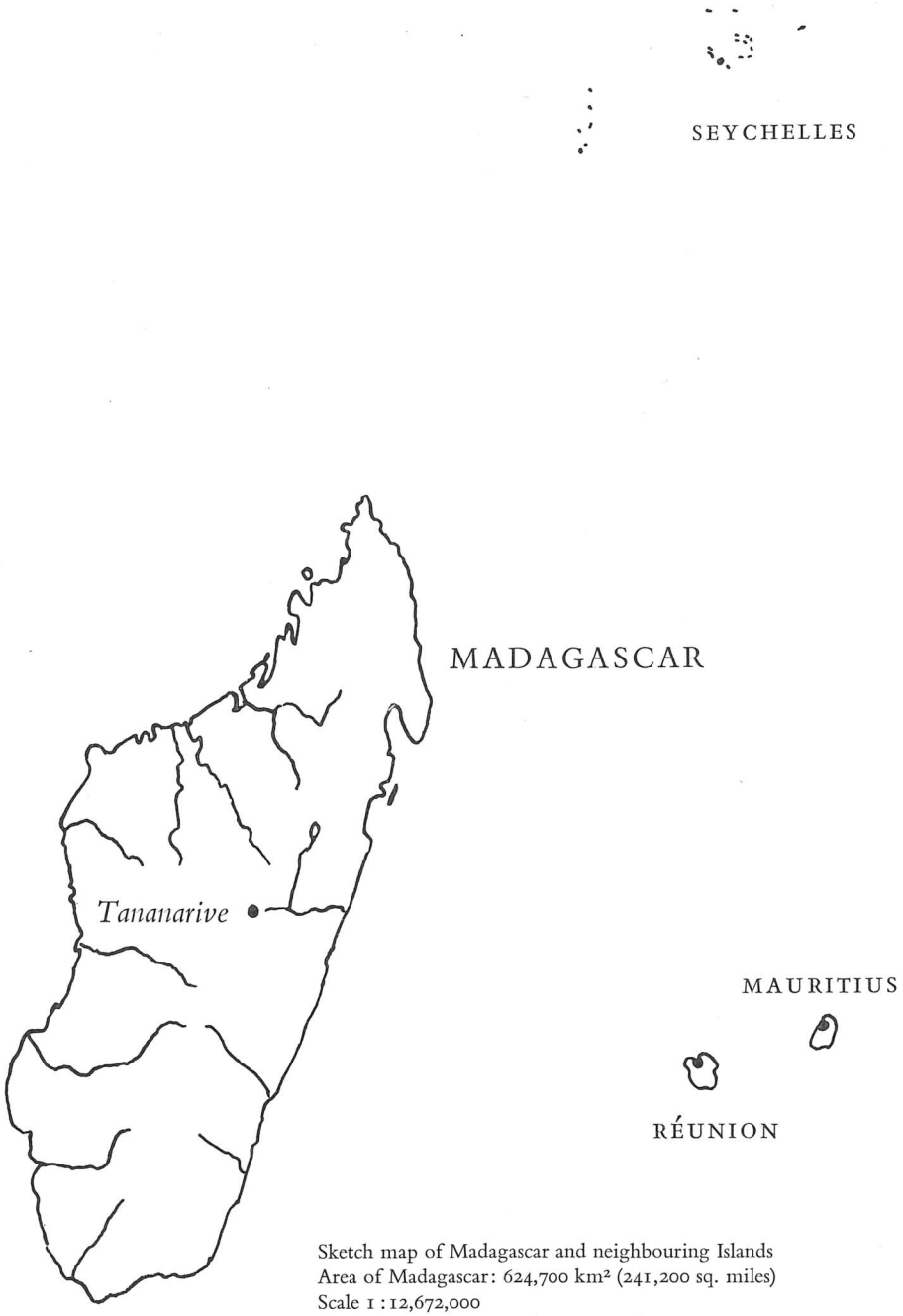
PUBLICOLA collègue de Brutus lors du renversement du trône, publia son code républicain, il permit d'appeler au peuple assemblé des jugemens des magistrats, et défendit, sous peine de mort, d'accepter aucune charge sans son aveu. Il diminua les tailles et autorisa le *tyrannicide*. Sa constance à défendre le peuple lui fit donner le sur-nom de *Publicola* ou d'ami du peuple. Ce fut lui qui prononça l'oraison funèbre de Brutus et qui introduisit la coutume de faire l'éloge de tous les morts célèbres. Il mourut si pauvre, que la république fut obligée de fournir aux frais de ses funérailles. Rome porta son deuil pendant un an.

Après lui, les grands poussèrent l'usure à un si haut point, que le peuple dans l'impossibilité de s'acquitter, et poursuivi avec la dernière inhumanité, se souleva plusieurs fois. Le sénat fut d'abord inflexible, mais irrité de plus en plus de la férocité de ses créanciers et de l'opiniâtreté du sénat, le peuple se retira au *mont sacré* : là, il traita d'égal avec les sénateurs, ne rentra dans Rome que sous la condition que l'on abolirait les dettes, et que l'on nommerait deux magistrats, qui, sous le titre de tribuns, seraient particulièrement chargés de veiller à ses intérets.

two sheet-almanacs for the years 1806 and 1807 now preserved in the Archives of Saint-Denis. It is doubtful if Boyer's output included any important publication apart from the newspapers and the almanacs. The various codes which were printed in Ile de France during Decaen's government were common to both islands, and there is no evidence that there were special issues for Réunion.

With regard to other types of publications, we must observe that the intellectual revival which took place in Ile de France during Decaen's government did not extend to Réunion which had always lagged far behind the former island in this respect. Whereas, for instance, several intellectual circles had come into being in Ile de France since 1786 Réunion still did not possess a single one at the time of its conquest by the British, and it was not until ten years later that Baron Milius founded the first local academy under the name of *Société Philotechnique*.

Printing in Madagascar and Seychelles



Sketch map of Madagascar and neighbouring Islands
Area of Madagascar: 624,700 km² (241,200 sq. miles)
Scale 1 : 12,672,000
1 cm = 126.7 km; 1 inch = 200 miles

Throughout the eighteenth century Madagascar was regarded by the authorities of Ile de France as a 'dependency' of this island, although the French never held more than a few trading stations on the east coast.

All projects for extending French influence in Madagascar were invariably opposed, however, by the settlers of Ile de France who feared that this might diminish the importance of their own island. Madagascar was regarded by them as a source of supply for slaves, bullocks, and rice, and nothing more, and they never thought of trying to civilize or christianize the natives there.

The Lazarist priests who then worked in the Mascarene Islands were not a printing congregation like the Jesuits, and their efforts in this field were limited to the production of a few books in the Malagasy dialect, the most important of which, Challan's *Vocabulaire Français-Malgache* of 1773, has already been mentioned.

When the conquest of the Mascarene Islands opened this quarter of the Indian Ocean to British missionary enterprise the London Missionary Society entered the field, and in 1826 sent out a press with a printer named Charles Hovenden, who had been previously employed by the Bible Society at St Petersburg. But within two days of his arrival with his family at Tananarive, they were seized with malarial fever, and on 15th December 1827 Hovenden died.

The conduct of the press was then undertaken by James Cameron, a member of the staff of the industrial division of the mission. Before the end of December 1827 Cameron, although he had little practical knowledge of the art of printing, succeeded in producing a sheet containing the first 23 verses of Genesis in Malagasy.

Thereafter the missionaries endeavoured, with the assistance of natives, to print, though under many disadvantages, a number of first lessons for the schools and other small elementary books.

In the meantime another qualified printer named Edward Baker, having been engaged by the London Missionary Society to succeed Hovenden, left England in May 1828 and arrived in Madagascar early in September. Through his exertions the press was kept in active and efficient operation and a larger supply of books was thereby provided than the Mission ever possessed.

From 1832 to 1834 Baker was in England, but the printing work continued actively under the supervision of one Kitching, whom Baker had trained. According to Ellis 'in 1833, not fewer than fifteen thousand copies, and portions of the Scriptures, and other books, were furnished, and upwards of six thousand of them put into circulation as soon as they were ready.'

In 1836, the persecution of Christians in Madagascar having become bitter, Baker left in August and went to settle in Mauritius where, in 1842, he launched out as the printer of a newspaper called *La Sentinelle*. In 1846 he left for South Australia where he spent the rest of his life.

In 1862 Madagascar was reopened to christian missionaries and printing was resumed by both protestant and catholic bodies. Further progress was made after the annexation of the island by France in 1895, and now Madagascar has some very good printing establishments, both lay and religious.

The next 'dependency' of Mauritius where printing was introduced in the first half of the nineteenth century was the Seychelles archipelago, a cluster of small islands about a thousand miles north of the Mascarenes, which received their first settlers from Ile de France in 1770.

In the beginning, however, the settlement was very small and there was little need for a printing press. There were no natives either to christianize, the Seychelles, like the Mascarenes, being uninhabited before the coming of the first Europeans, so there was no incentive for missionaries to go and work there.

The introduction of printing into the island of Mahé, the chief island of the group, was a purely commercial undertaking due to the initiative of a French settler of Mauritius named Thomy Mamin who took out a small press from Mauritius to Mahé in 1839.

Its first product was a weekly newspaper called *Le Feuilleton des Séchelles*, the first issue of which came out on 10th January 1840. No copies seem to be available now and this paper is known to us through an account of it which appeared in the Mauritius newspaper *Le Cernéen* on 12th May 1840.

Nous avons reçu des nouvelles des Seychelles. — la plus importante est celle de la publication d'un journal. C'est la première fois, depuis la découverte de l'Ile, que la presse y élève sa voix, et c'est là un progrès que nous sommes heureux de constater. On prétend que ce journal s'imprime du consentement de M. le Commandant de l'Archipel ; mais moyennant certaines restrictions qu'on ne peut justifier, selon nous.

Il faut féliciter sincèrement ceux qui ont concouru à doter les Seychelles du bienfait de la presse. Ils attachent glorieusement leurs noms à la plus heureuse des institutions. Félicitons aussi les habitans d'avoir désormais à leur disposition les moyens de réclamer et de se défendre. Dans leur intérêt, nous les invitons à réunir leurs pensées, leurs efforts et leurs bourses, pour soutenir le journal qu'ils possèdent aujourd'hui. Si, cédant à l'absurde mais assez commun désir de dénigrer tout ce qui est nouveau ; si, par indolence ou par apathie, les habitans des Seychelles restaient indifférens aux efforts de leur presse, ils mériteraient que le retour des malheurs et des iniquités de toute sorte dont ils ont souffert pendant si long-tems, n'éveillât plus aucune sympathie.

Cette publication a adopté le titre de *Feuilleton des Séchelles*. Ce mot de Feuilleton, dans son acception ordinaire (et c'est celle dans laquelle il faut le prendre), ne s'entend d'habitude, en France, que de la partie littéraire d'un journal. Un autre titre eût donc été plus convenable, à notre avis.

Malgré le plaisir que nous avons éprouvé à lire quelques numéros du *Feuilleton*, nous n'avons pu nous empêcher de remarquer que les sujets qu'ils traitent, sont d'un intérêt bien moins important que ceux qui en ont sans aucun doute provoqué la publication. Une esquisse rapide de l'histoire du pays, son état actuel comparé à celui des anciens temps ; la situation exacte de la population de l'île ; le tableau fidèle de sa misere et de ses besoins ; l'énumération complète de ses ressources, voilà ce qui aurait dû, ce nous semble, remplir les premières colonnes éditoriales de cette publication.

Après cela les questions particulières : chercher des remèdes aux maux qui y existent encore, attaquer le vagabondage et la paresse ; encourager le travail ; le présenter à *tous* comme le moyen le plus sûr, le plus moral et le plus légitime d'arriver au bonheur, voilà ce que nous aurions voulu voir dans les premières colonnes du *Feuilleton des Séchelles*.

Mais lorsqu'on saura que c'est la même personne qui redige, compose, corrige, imprime, tire et distribue cette feuille, on comprendra qu'il ne faut pas tout d'abord se montrer trop exigeant.

L'émigration des anciens habitans continue ; les ex-apprentis sont plus déterminés que jamais à ne rien faire.

Le cimetière est enfin clos ; un mur et une haie d'acacias cachent à la vue les monuments funèbres que renferme l'enceinte ; on parle de faire une jetée, de rétablir les rues et les chemins, etc.

Quelques unes de ces améliorations sont dues à M. Mylius, qui ne se serait pourtant pas entièrement decidé, dit-on, à mettre de côté certaines habitudes de despotisme et d'arbitraire qui lui ont fait à Maurice une sorte de célébrité.

Notice reporting the first issue of the *Feuilleton des Séchelles* in *Le Cernéen* of 12th May 1840 (Mauritius Archives)

On 8th July 1840 its title was changed to *Le Séchellois*, under which name it is said to have lived nine months, that is, until about March 1841.

The only other known product of Mamin's press is an almanac which is briefly described in the issue of the *Le Cernéen* of 10th June 1840. It is also mentioned by Webb who says it was entitled *Des Iles Labourdonnais dites Seychelles* and was produced with the assistance of a literary society formed in Mahé by the civil commissioner Mylius in 1839.

It seems almost certain that Mamin discontinued his printing activities early in 1841; and as long as the memory of his failure lived in the mind of the people of Seychelles no one showed any eagerness to launch on another printing venture. Then on 29th January 1877 Mr. A. M. Descombes issued at Mahé the second newspaper to be published in Seychelles, using for the purpose a small lithographic press imported from Mauritius. This paper, called *L'Impartial*, lasted only one year.

The attempt was not renewed until two decades later when Numa Morel started on 28th April 1899 *Le Réveil*, which was more successful than its predecessors. From then on some ten newspapers are known to have been published in Mahé, mostly in French.

In the meantime a government printing office was set up for the first time in Mahé in September 1877, the plant being supplied by the Mauritius authorities. On 1st December 1877 the Civil Commissioner in Seychelles reported to the Governor of Mauritius that this government press was used 'for printing the Seychelles Government Gazette, the minutes of the proceedings of public bodies and forms and notices.' Down to 1899, when Morel started publishing *Le Réveil*, this seems to have been the only printing equipment available in Seychelles.

Oriental Printing in Mauritius

Mauritius is not only one of the first countries in the Indian Ocean area where European printing began at an early date. It is also probably the only non-Asian country in this area to have a fairly ancient record of Oriental printing.

In 1834 Mauritius began importing from India a large number of indentured labourers known as 'coolies' to work on its sugar cane plantations. Down to 1909, when the so-called 'coolie trade' came to an end, the total number of Indians thus imported amounted to some 450,000, most of whom settled for good in this island.

With these labourers also came a good number of Moslem merchants from Gujerati-speaking areas of the Indian sub-continent and a trickle of Chinese retail traders, mainly from the province of Canton.

According to the last census, held in 1962, out of a total population of 681,619 persons, there were 206,978 who could speak Hindi, 40,667 Urdu, 17,970 Tamil, 13,621 Chinese, 7,420 Marathi, 6,721 Telegu and 734 Gujerati, that is a grand total of 294,111 persons with, at least, a smattering of one of these seven oriental languages.

The number of oriental periodicals and newspapers printed at present in Mauritius amounts to four in Chinese, three in Hindi, one in Hindi, French and English, and one in Tamil, French and English.

In the beginning Tamil-speaking immigrants from South India seem to have been most numerous, since the earliest record of Oriental printing in Mauritius is in Tamil print.

This consisted of short commercial advertisements printed in the columns of the French newspaper *Le Mauricien* from 27th March 1843 to 6th February 1863.

This Tamil print was probably imported from Pondicherry, in India, but noth-

(N° 1300.—10me ANNÉE.) MAURICE, LUN

சரீவேல்வராயநஜ:॥

மோரிஸ் தஅசந ஆண்டு மார்ஸ் மாசம்
உஎ தேதி, சோமவாரம

பாங்கம.

கல்யாணம கன்னவத்துவை சமாதி தலைக் கட்டு கருமாந்திரம், இவைமுதலிய காரியங்களுக்குவேண்டிய கடிதங்களும் பிரசுரம் ஏலம இவைமுதலானவையும் வேண்டியவர்களுக்கு இங்கிலீசுந் தமிழுமாகவாவது பிராஞ்சுந்தமிழுமாகவாவது பரிஷகாரந தமிழ்மாததிரமாவது மோரிசியன் அசசுககூடத்தில் அசசிற்பதிப்பித்துக் கொடுகக்கப்படும.

இஃது பாறு, இரா, அருளப்ப-சஞ்சீவிராயலு செட்டியாரால, அசசுப் பதிப்பிக்கப பட்டது.

EVERY one who may desire to have any notice whatever printed in *Tamil* language, (malabar), will have it by applying at the *Mauricien* office.

ON fera à l'imprimerie du *Mauricien* toute espèce d'ouvrages en langue *Tamoul* ou *malabare*, tels que : billets de mariage, d'enterrement, de service, insertions d'avis, etc., etc.

Les amis et connaissances de feu Monsieur FORTUNÉ BARRAUT père, sont priés d'assister à son service qui sera célébré demain mardi, 28 courant, à 8 heures précises du matin en l'Eglise Paroissiale du Port-Louis.

De la part de sa veuve et de ses enfans.

AUJOURD'HUI lundi, 27 cou
cises, dans les magasi
Saundry et Co., négocians, et
vendu par M. C. M. Campbe
sans retrait pour clore des co
Une quantité de marchandi
lam écru, indiennes, parasols,
do., étoffes en soie pour gile
de couleur supérieures, papier
A la suite, un ameublement
chaises, bureaux, armoires, co

AUJOURD'HUI lundi, 27 co
mie, derrière l'Hôpital
de MM. H. Barlow et Co.,
par M. C. M. Campbell, co
81 pièces faux gayac de l'
A la suite, dans leur mag
1 caisse verroterie assor
1 baril orge perlé,
50 balles riz Mooghy san
1 caisse thé vert, 1 do. c
10 caisses bougie diaphan
10 douzaines chaises am
2 tables do
Le tout sans retrait et pa
des comptes.

AUJOURD'HUI lundi, 27 co
l'établissement Thomé
MM. Chapman et Barclay,
chenrader, commissaire prise
64 balles riz Mooghy légèr
tabac en feuilles.

DEMAIN mardi, 28 couran
il sera vendu aux Pan
dence de feu le docteur Mac
veuve, par M. C. M. Campbe
Lits, table à manger, tables
services à dîner, verres, crista
Un cheval allant au har
ou deux chevaux avec doubl
1 mule dressée à la voiture, a
1 bourriquet et 1 charrette, e
jets dont le détail serait trop

ing definite can be said on this point. When *Le Mauricien* disappeared in 1864 the type was apparently used for printing a commercial news-sheet known as *Mercantile Advertizer*, which is mentioned for the first time in the *Cernéen* of 2nd November 1868. No copies, however, have been traced.

The next venture in Oriental printing was made in 1883. On 2nd March 1883 *Le Cernéen* mentions the issue released on the previous day of the first copy of a paper in Hindustani (presumably Urdu) and Gujerati entitled *Anjuman Islam Maurice* and edited by one Mirza Ahmod, residing at 11 Queen Street, Port Louis. No copies of this publication have been traced. It was probably printed on a lithographic press and did not last long.

Thereafter several papers or news-sheets containing contributions in Urdu lithographed handwriting were issued at various dates, but the first paper to use Urdu print, *The Minaret*, did not appear until much later. Its earliest issue registered in the Mauritius Archives is dated 17th October 1957. It was a bi-lingual paper (mainly religious) in English and Urdu, with English as the dominant language. The last issue containing material in Urdu is dated 26th July 1963. The paper was then continued in English and French only, the latter now the dominant language.

The earliest known paper containing material in Gujerati print is *The Hindusthani*, a political weekly started in Mauritius in 1909 by Dr. Manilall, a barrister-at-law from Bombay who came to the island in 1907, hoping to rouse the Indians to political consciousness.

This publication contained contributions in English, Gujerati, and later also Hindi. The first issue, in English and Gujerati, came out on 15th March 1909. The earliest—but not necessarily the first—one containing material in Hindi which is available in the Mauritius Archives is dated 2nd March 1913. Dr. Manilall had then gone back to India, and the paper was edited by Pandit Ramawadh.

Shortly after the demise of *The Hindusthani* another Hindi paper called *Mauritius Arya Patrika* and printed apparently on the press first used by Dr. Manilall came into being, presumably in 1914. Unfortunately no information could be obtained on its beginnings, and the files available in the Mauritius Archives do not go back further than 17th October 1924.

In 1950 its title was changed to *Aryoday*, and in a note appearing in the issue of 9th November 1950 Pandit Atmaram, who was then responsible for its publication, claimed that his paper 'had an history of thirty-six years standing'.

Oriental imprint of Mauritius. An advertisement in Tamil in *Le Mauricien* of 27th March 1843 (Mauritius Archives)

With regard to Chinese printing there is a reference in the *Annales de l'Union Catholique et du Diocèse de Port-Louis* of 21st December 1895 to a *Mauritius Chinese Gazette*, of which no copies are now extant. It is doubtful if the Chinese population of Mauritius, which was then very small (just over 3,000 in 1900) had a paper of its own printed in Chinese at such an early date.

The earliest publication in Chinese print on record in the Mauritius Archives is a daily newspaper entitled *Chung Hua Jih Pao*, or *Chinese Daily News*, founded by three Chinese named Li Pak U, How Choon, and Tu Wee Man. It was printed entirely in Chinese and first issued on 11th August 1932.

The only Oriental languages that seem to have any future in Mauritius now are Hindi, Chinese, and Tamil, but it is important to note that, so far, the Oriental record has been limited chiefly to the issue of newspapers, with varying degrees of success, and that Oriental publications in book form are few and far between.

It would also appear that more often than not what goes by the name of Hindi in Mauritius is actually a corrupt form of that language known as Bhojpuri and that what is supposed to be Chinese is only an aberrant form of the latter.

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